

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

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AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 2908

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MY TH

SUBJECT: MALAYSIAN STATEMENTS ON THAI MUSLIM SEPARATISM

REF: A. BANGKOK 9963

B. KUALA LUMPUR 2796

C. BANGKOK 10059

1. SUMMARY: STRONG REACTION IN BANGKOK TO STATEMENTS OF GOM MINISTER DATUK ASRI CONCERNING THAI MUSLIM SEPARATISM HAS RUFFLED GOM-RTG RELATIONS, BUT GOM IS ATTEMPTING RATIONALIZE ASRI'S REMARKS ON GROUNDS THEY WERE MADE AS PRIVATE CITIZEN IN POLITICAL PARTY FORUM, NOT AS EXPRESSION OF GOVT POLICY. THIS REPORT CONTAINS FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON ASRI'S SPEECH REPORTED REF B AND ANSWERS EMBASSY BANGKOK'S QUERY PER REF A. END SUMMARY.

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2. GIST OF REMARKS ON THAI MUSLIM SEPARATISM BY DATUK ASRI BIN HAJI MUDA, GOM MINISTER FOR LAND DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIAL FUNCTIONS

(ISLAMIC AFFAIRS), BEFORE PAN-MALAY ISLAMIC PARTY (PMIP) CONGRESS JUNE 13 REPORTED REF B. ASRI IS ALSO PRESIDENT OF PMIP WHICH FORMED COALITION WITH PRIME MINISTER RAZAK'S ALLIANCE PARTY IN PYUANUARY 1973, THUS IS NOT "OPPOSITION PARTY" AS REPORTED IN BANGKOK PRESS.

3. IN REPLIES TO QUERIES FROM NEWSMEN JUNE 19, FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN IVOR KRAAL MADE FOLLOWING POINTS: (A) GOM VALUES FRIENDSHIP WITH THAILAND; (B) GOM "NEVER HAS AND NEVER WILL" SUPPORT THAI MUSLIM SEPARATISTS; AND (C) ASRI'S STATEMENTS TO PMIP CONGRESS WERE MADE AS PRIVATE CITIZEN, NOT AS GOVT SPOKESMAN. WE UNDERSTAND THAT KRAAL'S STATEMENT WILL NOT BE DISSEMINATED AS OFFICIAL GOM PRESS RELEASE.

4. FOR THE RECORD, FOLLOWING IS COMPLETE TRANSLATION OF ASRI'S COMMENTS WHICH FORMED PART OF A MUCH LONGER SPEECH:

BEGIN TEXT: IN MY SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF LAST YEAR'S (PMIP) CONGRESS, I DISCUSSED THE PROBLEM OF MUSLIM MINORITY GROUPS IN OTHER NATIONS. WE URGED THOSE NATIONS TO TAKE POSITIVE STEPS TO SAFEGUARD THEIR FREEDOM AND TO GIVE THEM RIGHTS USUALLY ACCORDED TO MINORITY GROUPS. HOWEVER, THERE HAVE AS YET BEEN NO MEANINGFUL CHANGES WITH RESPECT TO WHAT WAS URGED LAST YEAR. THE MUSLIM PROBLEM IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES AND IN SOUTHERN THAILAND IS STILL THE SAME, AND THERE HAVE NOT YET BEEN ANY EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THIS PROBLEM TO ENSURE THAT THERE WILL BE PEACE AND FREEDOM.

WE TRULY HOLD TO THE PRINCIPLE OF NOT INTERFERING IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER NATIONS, BECAUSE THE TWO NATIONS CONCERNED ARE FRIENDLY AND ALSO IN THE CONTEXT OF ASEAN. WE DO NOT AT ALL INTEND TO DISRUPT THOSE NATIONS, BUT ARE ATTEMPTING TO PROMOTE COOPERATION WITH THOSE FRIENDLY NATIONS, ESPECIALLY THAILAND WHERE CLOSE COOPERATION IS NEEDED IN THE EFFORT TO ELIMINATE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS IN THE BORDER AREA AND TO FIX THE BORDER BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND THAILAND. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF OUR CLOSE COOPERATION, IT IS NOT UNSEEMLY FOR US AS AN ISLAMIC PARTY TO GIVE ATTENTION TO A PROBLEM WHICH IS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE AND EMOTIONAL WITH THE HOPE THAT SOME SOLUTION MIGHT BE ACHIEVED.
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THERE IS NO ONE WHO DENIES THAT THE FAILURE TO ACHIEVE A SOLUTION IS TO ANYONE'S BENEFIT, AND AT THE SAME TIME THAT A SOLUTION WILL ENSURE PEACE AND SECURITY.

THE MOVEMENT IN SOUTHERN THAILAND IN THE FOUR PROVINCES WILL SURELY CREATE MORE PROBLEMS FOR BOTH THE THAI AND MALAYSIAN SIDES IN THE EFFORT TO ELIMINATE THE COMMUNIST TERRORISTS ALONG THE BORDER.

IT IS OUR HOPE AND OUR VIEW THAT THE OBJECTIVE OF AUTONOMY

WITH SPECIFIC CONDITIONS FOR THE SOUTHERN THAI PROVINCES IS REASONABLE, AS PUT FORWARD BY THE LIBERATION FRONT (SIC), AND WILL CONSTITUTE A POSITIVE STEP TOWARD THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PEACE AND SECURITY. END TEXT.

6. COMMENT: IT WOULD APPEAR THAT GOM IS ATTEMPTING TO MINIMIZE IMPACT OF ASRI'S STATEMENT (A) BECAUSE THE ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS' CONFERENCE IS NOW UNDERWAY IN K.L. AND THEY PROBABLY FEEL THAT THEY CANNOT AT THIS POINT MAKE ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT THAT MIGHT UNDERCUT MUSLIM CO-RELIGIONISTS IN SOUTHERN THAILAND, AND (B) BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PMIP SOLIDARITY WITH THE NATIONAL FRONT IN THE UPCOMING GENERAL ELECTION. WE PRESUME, THEREFORE, THAT GOM HOPES RTG WILL BE SATISFIED BY VERBAL ASSURANCES NOTED ABOVE AND WILL NOT PRESS FOR SOME SORT OF PUBLIC APOLOGY.

7. SUBSEQUENT TO PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT WE LEARNED THAT ASRI WILL HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE THIS AFTERNOON (JUNE 20). ASRI'S FURTHER COMMENTS ON SOUTHERN THAI PROBLEM WILL BE REPORTED ASAP.
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